GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:120
ANSWERED ON:24.10.2008
ARSENIC FREE DRINKING WATER
Acharia Shri Basudeb

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has formulated any long term strategy to provide arsenic free water to the people across the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any task force has been constituted in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the recommendations made by it?

Answer

MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT(DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to Lok Sabha Starred Question No.120 to be answered on 24.10.2008.

(a) to (d): To address the drinking water quality problem in the rural areas in a focused manner, Government of India launched the Revised Sub-Mission on water quality in 2006-07. Under this component, up to 20% ARWSP funds can be utilized for addressing water quality problems which includes Arsenic contamination. Under the Revised Sub- Mission on Water Quality, addressing arsenic contamination has been given top priority.

A Task Force was constituted by the Planning Commission in August, 2005 for formulating an action plan for removal of Arsenic contamination in West Bengal. The Task Force submitted its recommendations in July, 2007. The main recommendation was that the best solution to arsenic problem lies in providing alternate sources of arsenic free water by tapping surface water sources and not treatment of arsenic wherein it is pumped from ground water and may leach into the surface environment. It was also stated that treatment of arsenic and unsafe disposal of effluents can lead to further serious water contamination problem including leaching into hitherto uncontaminated surface water and the general environment. The Task Force constituted by the Planning Commission highlighted the need the intensive education, community awareness, and water quality surveillance mechanisms to prevent the continued or increased use of arsenic contaminated water for drinking and cooking purposes.

Based on the Task Force`s report, a Strategy paper developed by the Department has been sent to the States where arsenic contamination in ground water is severe. As arsenic occurs in a certain sub-strata of the ground, intensive efforts are also being made to develop hydrogeomorphological maps (ground water prospect maps) using satellite data as a forewarning to the States about potential for arsenic contamination.

The Department is continuously monitoring all arsenic mitigation efforts and providing sufficient financial and technical assistance as per the request projected by the concerned States.